

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: EUR/WE:WHMARSH

APPROVED BY: EUR/WE:REBARBOUR

IO/UNP:MRS. WILLIAMSON

NEA:MISS GRIFFIN

S/S-O:MTANNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 059230

EXDIS

FOLLOWING IS REPEAT STATE 059230, SENT USUN, INFO ALGIERS,
MADRID, NOUAKCHOTT, TUNIS, 11 MARCH 76:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 059230

EXDIS

E.O11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, SS

SUBJECT: BRIEFING UN SYG ON ATHERTON CONSULTATIONS RE
SPANISH SAHARA

REF: USUN 692

1. MISSION MAY USE FOLLOWING IN BRIEFING UN SYG WALDHEIM
ON ATHERTON'S CONSULTATIONS.

2. ATHERTON'S TRIP WAS NOT A 'SAHARA MISSION", BUT WAS IN
CONTEXT OF OUR PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS WITH MAGHREB GOVERN-
MENTS ON RANGE OF BILATERAL AND REGIONAL QUESTIONS.

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OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, SAHARA QUESTION WAS VERY MUCH ON THE

MINDS OF LEADERS HE SAW. FULFILLING A LONG STANDING ENGAGEMENT, UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON WAS GOING TO ALGIERS TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. WHEN WE LEARNED THAT BOUMEDIENE WANTED BROADER DISCUSSIONS, SECRETARY KISSINGER DECIDED TO SEND ATHERTON ALONG, AND TO INCLUDE TUNISIA AND MOROCCO IN HIS ITINERARY.

3. IN ALGERIA ATHERTON URGED A CONTINUING SEARCH FOR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS AND SAID HE WOULD DO THE SAME IN MOROCCO BUT THAT REALISTICALLY SUCH A SOLUTION COULD NOT IGNORE FACT NEW SITUATION EXISTED IN WAKE OF MOROCCAN/ MAURITANIAN TAKEOVER. BOUMEDIENE IMPRESSED ATHERTON AS BEING RESIGNED TO PROLONGED TENSION. BOUMEDIENE SAID THE

PROBLEM SHOULD NOT BE SOLVED BY WAR. HE EMPHASIZED PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND INSISTED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS NOT SOLVED, ASSERTING MOROCCAN TAKEOVER WAS ILLEGAL AND NOT INTERNATIONALLY LEGITIMIZED. BOUMEDIENE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE SAHARA PEOPLE, REPRESENTED BY THE POLISARIO. ATHERTON HAD THE IMPRESSION BOUMEDIENE WAS DETERMINED, BUT NOT MILITANT, AND THAT HE FELT TIME WAS ON ALGERIA'S SIDE. BOUMEDIENE DID NOT ACT, HOWEVER, AS THOUGH HE HAD CLOSED ALL DOORS PERMANENTLY.

4. IN MOROCCO ATHERTON GAINED THE IMPRESSION HASSAN THINKS HIS POSITION IS NOW BETTER THAN BOUMEDIENE'S, EVEN IN OAU. HASSAN IS ENCOURAGED BY WHAT HE SEES AS CAUTIOUS SOVIET ATTITUDE. HASSAN BELIEVES HIS POLICY HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND IS DETERMINED TO STAY ON COURSE. HASSAN ALSO WANTS TO AVOID HOSTILITIES, BUT INDICATED HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE INDEFINITE WAR OF ATTRITION WITH GUERRILLAS. HASSAN SAID HE WAS LOOKING FOR FORMULA FOR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION, PROVIDED MOROCCO'S POSITION IN THE SAHARA WAS NOT QUESTIONED.

5. WE DO NOT AT MOMENT DETECT ELEMENTS FOR AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE. MOROCCO'S CONSULTATION OF RUMP JEMA'A, AND PROCLAMATION OF SAHRAOUI DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC HAVE FURTHER LOCKED BOTH SIDES IN. PRINCIPAL FACTORS WHICH WILL INFLUENCE EVOLUTION OF SITUATION SEEM TO BE THE FOLLOWING:

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-- THE VIABILITY AND STAYING POWER OF THE POLISARIO AND LEVEL OF GOA BACKING.

-- WHETHER ISSUE CAN BE CONTAINED IN REGIONAL CONTEXT WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION.

-- ABILITY OF MOROCCO TO MAINTAIN POPULAR SUPPORT FOR POS-

SIBLE PROLONGED STRUGGLE TO ASSERT AND KEEP CONTROL OF
AREA.

-- STAYING POWER OF MAURITANIA IN FACE OF GUERRILLA ATTACKS
AND/OR POLITICAL PRESSURE. INGERSOLL UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BRIEFING MATERIAL, POLITICAL SITUATION, SELFDETERMINATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE059230
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EUR/WE:WHMARSH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760097-0261
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760360/aaaacamw.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRIEFING UN SYG ON ATHERTON CONSULTATIONS RE SPANISH SAHARA
TAGS: PFOR, SS, UN, (WALDHEIM, KURT), (MOYNIHAN, DANIEL P)
To: PARIS ROME
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006